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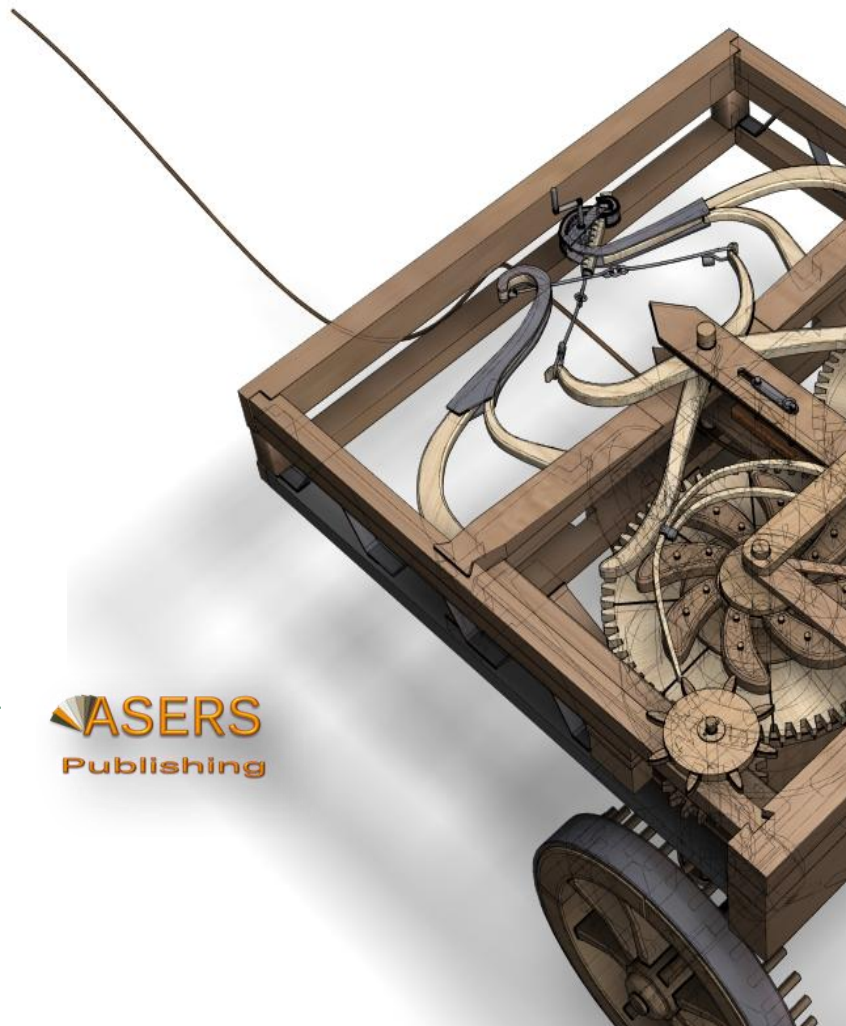
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism

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Authors are encouraged to submit high quality, original works that discuss the latest developments in environmental management research and application with the certain scope to share experiences and research findings and to stimulate more ideas and useful insights regarding current best-practices and future directions in Environmental Management.

Also, this journal is committed to a broad range of topics regarding Tourism and Travel Management, leisure and recreation studies and the emerging field of event management. It contains both theoretical and applied research papers and encourages obtaining results through collaboration between researchers and those working in the tourism industry.

The journal takes an interdisciplinary approach and includes planning and policy aspects of international, national and regional tourism as well as specific management studies. Case studies are welcomed when the authors indicate the wider applications of their insights or techniques, emphasizing the global perspective of the problem they address.

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Tourism in Sri Lanka during Political, Economic, and Environmental Crises: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract: This article examines the impact of interconnected political, economic, and environmental crises on Sri Lanka's tourism sector, analyzing their effects on tourism strategies.

Employing a qualitative research design, this study uses framework analysis to analyze data collected from semi-structured interviews with tourism stakeholders (for example, hotel managers, tour guides, and government officials) and secondary sources (for example, government reports and policy documents).

The study highlights Sri Lanka's tourism industry's vulnerability to political instability, economic downturns, and environmental issues. It emphasizes the need for adaptive strategies like diversifying offerings and targeting new markets. The study underscores the importance of resilience and flexibility in the sector to mitigate future crises.

This study fills a gap in literature by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the interconnected challenges confronting Sri Lanka's tourism sector, as well as providing context-specific resilience-building measures tailored to a multifaceted crisis environment.

The findings indicate that policymakers should enact specific policies to promote sustainable tourist development, encompassing crisis management, infrastructure enhancement, and environmental preservation. Emphasizing legal systems and advancing sustainable practices will reinstate global confidence in the business.

Keywords: tourism crisis management; sustainable tourism development; qualitative framework analysis; Sri Lanka tourism.

JEL Classification: L83; O11; Q56; R11.

Introduction

Tourism serves as a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's economy, contributing significantly to the nation's Gross Domestic Product and providing direct and indirect employment to millions across the island (Galdolage *et al.* 2024, Ranasinghe *et al.* 2020). The country's rich cultural heritage, diverse ecosystems, and scenic landscapes make it an attractive destination for global travellers (Pathirana *et al.* 2024). However, the tourism industry is highly sensitive to external shocks and crises (Duan, Xie, and Morrison 2022), making it susceptible to fluctuations caused by political instability (Sönmez 1998, Eugenio-Martin and Campos-Soria 2014), economic downturns (Henderson 2007, Eugenio-Martin and Campos-Soria 2014), and environmental degradation (Gössling 2002, Ali *et al.* 2024). In recent years, Sri Lanka has experienced an unprecedented confluence of crises that have severely destabilised its tourism sector, including the devastating 2019 Easter Sunday terrorist attacks, the global COVID-19 pandemic, and a protracted economic crisis marked by soaring inflation, currency depreciation, foreign exchange shortages, and sovereign debt defaults (Withers 2024, Wettimuny 2021). The consecutive difficulties have resulted in a sharp decrease in foreign tourist arrivals, a downturn in tourism-related investment, and extensive economic distress for persons and communities dependent on the business (Fernando and Carr 2024).

The cumulative impact of these crises has underscored the vulnerabilities inherent in Sri Lanka's tourism sector and highlighted the urgent need for strategic interventions aimed at fostering resilience and sustainable development. This study seeks to conduct a thorough analysis of the obstacles facing Sri Lanka's tourist sector, emphasising the interaction among political instability, economic hardship, and environmental issues. This paper

examines the socio-economic impacts of these crises, focusing on how communities reliant on tourism have been disproportionately affected and assessing the wider implications for national economic stability. Overall, this study seeks to pinpoint policy interventions and strategic actions that can facilitate the recovery, enhance resilience, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Sri Lanka's tourism sector.

This research is crucial as it transcends mere analysis of crisis effects to offer tangible, evidence-based remedies that might strengthen Sri Lanka's tourism economy against future interruptions. The results aim to aid policymakers in developing effective recovery frameworks, assist industry stakeholders in adjusting business strategies, and offer scholars empirical insights that enhance the broader discussion on crisis resilience and sustainable tourism development.

While there is a lot of literature on tourist crises, most current research focuses on individual events rather than the interconnected challenges faced by Sri Lanka currently. The complex interdependencies between political, economic, and environmental dimensions remain underexplored, leaving a crucial gap in understanding how multi-faceted crises can be effectively managed within a tourism-dependent economy. This study fills a crucial gap in academic research and policy development by offering a detailed perspective on resilience-building measures tailored to Sri Lanka's circumstances. Given the vital role tourism plays in Sri Lanka's economic fabric, the findings of this study hold significant implications for shaping evidence-based strategies that can revitalise the sector and position it as a key driver of national recovery and growth.

1. Literature Review

The tourism industry's vulnerability to crises is well-established, arising from its dependence on human interaction, service perishability, and unpredictable demand (Kandampully and Solnet 2024, Santana 2004). Political instability and environmental challenges increase these vulnerabilities (Ivanov *et al.* 2020, Hall 2010). Aydogan *et al.* (2024) identified that service quality, customer satisfaction, resilient branding, and market diversification are essential attributes of crisis-resilient tourism organisations. Effective crisis management necessitates both proactive and reactive measures (Vašíčková 2019, Pforr and Hosie 2008), cultivating resilience to sustain operations during disruptions (Jiang, Ritchie, and Verreyne 2019). To make the tourism industry better prepared for future problems, future research should take a more in-depth look at both the pre- and post-crisis stages as well as the resilience of organisations (Pekdemir and Küçükaltan 2024).

Political instability, including terrorism and civil disturbance, significantly jeopardises tourism, resulting in decreased tourist arrivals due to safety apprehensions (Sönmez 1998). Incidents like the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka highlight this effect, requiring rehabilitation methods (Jayasinghe, Fernando, and Surangi 2023). Travel advisories produced by foreign governments can exacerbate these consequences (Beirman 2006, Lepp and Gibson 2003). Effective crisis communication can alleviate these adverse effects by reinstating confidence (Liu-Lastres 2022). Confidence in government influences locals' endorsement of tourism, although this may be adversely impacted in politically unstable areas (Henderson 2007).

Economic crises profoundly affect the tourist industry, frequently diminishing demand due to decreased disposable income and currency changes that modify affordability (Kaar 2009, Song, Li, and Cao 2018). Sri Lanka's recent financial crisis illustrates these issues, characterised by inflation, currency devaluation, and diminished consumer expenditure, resulting in a significant decrease in tourist arrivals (Wickramasinghe 2024). Destinations may have varied responses during periods of economic expansion compared to downturn (Perles-Ribes, Ramón-Rodríguez, Rubia-Serrano, *et al.* 2016). Notwithstanding these challenges, Sri Lanka's tourism industry has demonstrated resilience by advocating for domestic tourism and providing incentives to local travellers, thereby alleviating losses during the crisis (Jayasinghe *et al.* 2022). Worldwide economic crises compel destinations to diversify and enhance their offerings to sustain competitiveness (Henderson 2007). Maintaining pricing competitiveness and attracting foreign direct investment might enhance tourist competitiveness during economic downturns (Dwyer and Kim 2003, Perles-Ribes, Ramón-Rodríguez, Sevilla-Jiménez, *et al.* 2016).

Tourism significantly promotes economic development while concurrently exacerbating environmental challenges, such as carbon emissions, resource depletion, and habitat deterioration (Baloch *et al.* 2023). Measures for sustainable tourism, including green technology, ecotourism, and community-based initiatives, are crucial for mitigating these effects (Kumar *et al.* 2023). In Sri Lanka, primary environmental issues encompass waste management, deforestation, coral reef degradation, and water pollution, alongside the preservation of wildlife habitats and endangered species, as well as the overall integrity of ecosystems (Ayyam, Palanivel, and Chandrakasan 2019). This situation demands the implementation of more robust environmental policies and climate resilience strategies to guarantee long-term sustainability (Zhang, Lv, and Sarker 2024).

Tourism crisis management emphasises proactive preparation, stakeholder involvement, and sustainability (Ritchie 2004, Chau *et al.* 2023). Zhang, Lv, and Sarker (2024) underscore the importance of communication in post-disaster rehabilitation, whereas Gani and Singh (2019) advocate for organised research agendas, Artificial Intelligence forecasting (Kumar, Misra, and Chan 2022), and disaster models (Aldao *et al.* 2021) augment resilience. Sigala (2020) and Komasi *et al.* (2025) emphasise the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting adaptive methods. Sri Lanka's recovery entailed stringent border regulations (Wickramasinghe 2024). Praptika, Yusuf, and Heslinga (2024) emphasises sustainability, highlighting the necessity of diminished dependence on tourism revenues for enduring resilience and proficient crisis management.

Political unrest (such as Easter Sunday attacks), economic upheaval (such as the 2022 financial crisis), and environmental issues like coastline erosion have all had a negative impact on Sri Lanka's tourism industry (Fernando *et al.* 2023), which contributed around 5% of the country's Gross Domestic Product prior to the crisis. Recovery initiatives encompass the promotion of domestic tourism via incentives (Wickramasinghe and Naranpanawa 2023), diversification of offerings to attract affluent tourists (Pathirana *et al.* 2024), fortification of public-private partnerships for infrastructure enhancement (Rathnasiri, Dewasiri, and Kumar 2024), and the establishment of risk management frameworks to improve readiness for future disruptions (Rathnasiri, Dewasiri, and Kumar 2024, Jayasinghe *et al.* 2022). In December 2023, tourism arrivals increased significantly (Jayasinghe *et al.* 2022), facilitating economic growth, supported by IMF-backed stabilisation measures.

2. Method

This study utilises a qualitative research design to thoroughly investigate the difficulties confronting Sri Lanka's tourist sector. Qualitative research is ideally suited for this study as it facilitates a comprehensive knowledge of intricate processes, captures subtle views, and produces detailed descriptive data. The study employed an exploratory methodology to uncover the underlying reasons and mechanisms that make Sri Lanka's tourist sector vulnerable to crises. This method involves a flexible process of collecting and analysing data, allowing the researcher to adjust research questions and methods based on new insights.

The primary data collection included semi-structured interviews with a varied array of stakeholders, including tourism operators, including hotel managers, tour guides, and travel agencies, alongside government officials involved in tourism planning and policy development. Furthermore, interviews were carried out with community members reliant on tourism for their livelihoods, professors and researchers focused on tourism and development, and recent international tourists who visited Sri Lanka. The interviews sought to deliver comprehensive insights into the issues confronting the tourism sector, the repercussions of previous crises, and prospective options for recovery and sustainable development.

Alongside primary data gathering, secondary sources were thoroughly analysed to contextualise and enhance the conclusions derived from the interviews. The materials included government reports, policy documents on tourism, tourist arrival statistics, market research studies, and scholarly articles on tourism in Sri Lanka. Additionally, news stories and media coverage about tourism-related matters were examined to comprehend public debate and current trends impacting the sector. The study took a comprehensive approach, integrating data from primary and secondary sources to assess the challenges and opportunities in Sri Lanka's tourist sector.

A purposive sampling method was employed to choose participants for the semi-structured interviews. This technique entailed the selection of participants based on their knowledge, experience, and expertise pertinent to the tourist sector in Sri Lanka. The sample comprised individuals from various backgrounds and viewpoints to guarantee a thorough comprehension of the research subject.

The researcher used framework analysis to analyse qualitative data from interviews and documents. This method facilitated organised data reduction and synthesis, making it easier to identify and compare patterns across different cases. The data analysis process included reviewing all transcripts and documents, followed by the development of a thematic framework based on research questions, literature review, and initial data exploration. The framework included key themes and sub-themes related to political, economic, and environmental concerns. Subsequently, the data was coded based on the framework and consolidated into a matrix format for analysis. This allowed for a logical comparison of data across cases, identifying common patterns and divergent perspectives. The data in the matrix was analysed to identify connections between themes, draw conclusions, and generate insights to answer the research questions.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Measures were taken to protect participants and ensure the integrity of the research. Before conducting interviews, we obtained everyone's

informed consent, and we anonymized the data to maintain confidentiality. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative research, ensuring transparency and respect for participants' contributions.

3. Research Results

To offer a comprehensive illustration of the Framework Analysis process, an expanded example of the matrix is presented in Table 1. This expanded illustration includes additional interview data from the text, enhancing the clarity and depth of the themes identified. It is expanded to include more interview facts based on the provided text, which provides a better perspective and clarity to understand the themes. (Note that this is a simplified version for demonstration purposes). This matrix illustrates how data from different sources were organised and compared to identify key themes and patterns.

Table 1. The Matrix of Illustration of the Framework Analysis process

Theme	Sub-theme	Hotel Managers	Tour Operators	Government Officials	Tourism Reports
Political Crisis	Travel Advisories	"Bookings drop immediately after advisories. Tourists fear violent events; they want unpretentious vacations, not war zones. Adventure tourists are a niche, not the majority."	"Political instability means constant tour adjustments. Tourists are wary of unauthorized protests and violence; it's hard to guarantee their safety."	"Government is trying to reassure tourists, but political legitimacy is threatened. We're using media to counter the negative image, but it's an uphill battle."	Notes that a "decrease in tourism can be directly related to foreign governments issuing a travel advisory or a travel ban. In January 2022, Sri Lanka experienced political unrest, which included but was not limited to civil unrest as well as rolling power outages."
	Government Instability	"Uncertainty in government policy is hurting long-term planning. The government chastises protestors but offers no solutions which makes it difficult to invest in renovations or sustainable practices."	"The two major parties are deadlocked. The negative impacts affect tourists. A civil political movement is fighting against the entire government which makes the environment unsafe. I'm constantly worried about their safety."	"Political deadlock slows down support for tourism. Systemic failures in government investments means we can't effectively promote long-term growth."	"Reports a decline in foreign investment due to policy paralysis. There is political unrest which has resulted in a removal of the country's president, but the legislative solutions have not made any preventative actions."

Theme	Sub-theme	Hotel Managers	Tour Operators	Government Officials	Tourism Reports
Economic Crisis	Hyperinflation	"The rising costs make it hard to maintain services. Tourists are sensitive; every price hike drives them away and they choose other, more affordable countries."	"Tourists are spending less. High prices are forcing them to cut activities, shortening their stays or traveling to see different cities, and changing their experience. They may also be discouraged from going to certain tourist destinations, but are instead going elsewhere because of lower prices."	"Controlling inflation is slow. The government is limited by global commodity prices and the current depreciation but is starting to monetize the economic deficit".	Notes that an "increase in prices for tourists during their visit causes their budget to increase, leading them to seek more money, to leave because they must now scale back on their travels, or by controlling their finances more strictly."
	Fuel & Food Scarcity	"We struggle to get fuel to run generators; inconsistent food supplies mean we can't reliably offer international cuisine which makes Sri Lanka a less desirable country to visit".	"Fuel shortages limit travel. Tourists can't explore; those who visit are here to explore and have fun. They are missing cultural sites because it makes long travel within Sri Lanka difficult."	"We're securing fuel and food, but local needs come first. Some foreign food items must be imported for dietary preferences to satisfy and appease the foreign community, but this costs extra money we don't have in the current environment. We will not import these goods anytime soon."	States that "one of the main reasons for limiting travel within the country is because of the lack of fuel availability. This affects the tourism industry by making it difficult to travel to more tourist destinations. The tourists can travel in a vehicle, in a train, or by using public transportation." The report also mentions that the importation of foods has ceased."
	Deforestation & Habitat Loss	"Deforestation is making landscapes less appealing. Eco-tourism is suffering; the lack of biodiversity means Tourists cannot enjoy or visit wildlife."	"We're seeing fewer animals. I'm often asked to take my tour group to a different environment, but those destinations are overbooked. Loss of natural habitats reduce sightings, disappointing the visiting population."	"Replanting initiatives need more support. We need more funding and support, but economic issues limit what is possible".	Says that "the political choices that have resulted in the degradation of the environment have also caused a loss of biodiversity, as well as a diminishing of ecosystems which also impacts revenue."

Theme	Sub-theme	Hotel Managers	Tour Operators	Government Officials	Tourism Reports
Environmental Concerns	Pollution	"Garbage on beaches is a disaster. A constant source of complaints and negative reviews."	"Tourists hesitate to swim in polluted waters. They are afraid of getting sick."	"Initiatives exist, but progress is slow. The lack of money and political power makes for a loss of effort and focus."	-
	Climate Change	"Extreme weather disrupts everything. These changes damage infrastructure and limit long term stability. The tourism industry benefits from the infrastructure as well."	"Rising sea levels threaten coastal resorts. This endangers all Sri Lanka revenue streams, along with hotels and tourism as a whole."	"We're developing adaptation strategies but need international support. Climate changes will require a costly reaction, which is not feasible".	"Coastal and marine tourism makes important contributions to Sri Lanka's national economy. If these areas are threatened with sea level and natural occurrences, those are directly at risk."
	Unsustainable Tourism Practices	"Waste overwhelms local systems, damaging the perception of the industry. The local waste management sector is not evolved enough to handle a heavy waste environment."	"Unregulated activities damage ecosystems which discourages tourists who seek ethical travels. All the natural attractions must be available for viewing to tourists in the future."	"We need regulations, but enforcement is weak which makes Sri Lanka a less desirable country than before."	States that "the rapid growth of the tourism industry when not managed in a sustainable pattern contributes to environmental degradation."

Source: Analysis of interview data collected for this study.

Political Crisis: Erosion of Trust and Governance Deficits

Deep-seated mistrust between political factions, widespread polarisation within the populace, and a pervasive lack of confidence in governing institutions characterise Sri Lanka's political landscape, which is currently unstable. This prolonged period of political uncertainty has had profound implications for the stability of the country, not only in terms of its internal security but also in terms of its international reputation as a safe and attractive tourist destination.

- **Historical Impacts:** Sri Lanka has experienced several political crises in the past, which have invariably had a negative impact on the tourism sector. For example, between 1983 and 1989, the Sri Lankan crisis reduced inbound tourism arrivals by about 10% on an annual basis.

- **Recent Political Turmoil:** The political crisis in Sri Lanka has intensified in recent years, culminating in a period of unprecedented turmoil in 2022, with fuel lines and rolling power outages.

- **Impact on Tourism:** The political unrest and instability have had a direct and tangible impact on the tourism industry. As a hotel manager revealed, "The travel advisories are a major concern. Tourists fear violent events; they want unpretentious vacations, not war zones. Adventure tourists are a niche, not the majority." (Case 1, Political Crisis Theme). This aligns with the findings from Document 1, a tourism report, which noted a significant decrease in tourist arrivals following travel advisories and states that "a decrease in tourism can be directly related to foreign governments issuing a travel advisory or a travel ban."

- **Civil Unrest and Protests:** The political crisis has also sparked widespread civil unrest and protests. Politicians frequently ignored the tourism sector's sensitivity and susceptibility to these crises and instead used it as a pretext to blame protesters for the sector's demise rather than addressing the underlying problems. As a tour

guide noted, "Political instability means constant tour adjustments. Tourists are wary of unauthorised protests and violence; it's hard to guarantee their safety." (Case 2, Political Crisis Theme).

- **Systemic Failures:** Moreover, these protests have highlighted a systemic failure of the Sri Lankan government to properly invest in the tourism industry, both financially and logistically. A government official admitted, "Government is trying to reassure tourists, but political legitimacy is threatened. We're using media to counter the negative image, but it's an uphill battle." (Case 3, Political Crisis Theme).

Economic Crisis: Hyperinflation and Scarcity

Hyperinflation, currency depreciation, and an increasing debt load characterise the severe crisis that Sri Lanka's economy is currently experiencing. This economic turmoil has had a far-reaching impact on the tourism sector, posing significant challenges for businesses, workers, and travellers alike. According to the provided text, nearly every sector in Sri Lanka has recently experienced negative shifts. The text points to increased economic inequality, a political crisis that began in 2015, and environmental damage as a result of some political decisions in recent years.

- **Economic Downturn and Recession:** A tourism crisis can be caused by an economic downturn or recession, fluctuating exchange rates, a loss of market confidence, hyperinflation, or the withdrawal of investment funds.

- **Challenges for the Tourism Industry:** The hospitality and tourism industries are facing numerous challenges. As one local hotelier stated, "The rising costs make it hard to maintain services. Tourists are sensitive; every price hike drives them away, and they choose other, more affordable countries." (Case 1, Economic Crisis Theme).

- **Debt Crisis and Balance of Payments:** Sri Lanka's economic outlook is clouded by factors including the country's unsteady political climate and growing fiscal, external, and financial sector imbalances.

- **Inflation and Cost of Living:** In August 2022, the inflation rate in Sri Lanka hit a record high of 64.3%, driven primarily by food price increases of 93.73%. A tourist observed, "Tourists are spending less. High prices are forcing them to cut activities, shortening their stays, and changing their experience." (Tourist, Economic Crisis Theme).

- **Food Scarcity and Fuel Shortages:** Food scarcity and fuel shortages are major deterrents. The text highlights that if Sri Lanka wants to grow its tourism industry, it must first ensure that tourists' basic needs are met without difficulty.

Environmental Concerns: Degradation and Climate Change Vulnerability

Sri Lanka, renowned for its biodiversity and natural landscapes, is increasingly vulnerable to environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. These environmental challenges pose a significant threat to the tourism industry, potentially undermining the attractiveness of the country as a tourist destination.

- **Deforestation and Habitat Loss:** Deforestation, driven by agricultural expansion, logging, and urbanisation, has led to significant habitat loss. This reduces the appeal of ecotourism destinations as the landscapes become less pristine and wildlife sightings become rarer. A tour guide specialising in ecotourism stated, "We're seeing fewer animals on our tours because their habitats are disappearing. Loss of natural habitats reduces sightings, disappointing the visiting population." (Case 2, Environmental Concerns Theme). The text also confirms the political choices that have resulted in the degradation of the environment, the loss of biodiversity, and the diminishment of ecosystems.

- **Pollution and Waste Management:** Pollution, including air and water pollution, is another major environmental concern in Sri Lanka. Untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and agricultural runoff contaminate water sources, posing a threat to human health and damaging aquatic ecosystems. Poor waste management practices also contribute to pollution, with overflowing landfills and improper disposal of solid waste creating unsightly conditions and releasing harmful pollutants into the environment. A hotel manager noted, "Garbage on beaches is a disaster. A constant source of complaints and negative reviews." (Case 1, Environmental Concerns Theme). The unsustainable tourism practices increase the waste from tourists, overwhelming local waste management systems.

- **Climate Change Impacts:** Climate change is exacerbating environmental challenges in Sri Lanka, with rising sea levels, more frequent and intense extreme weather events, and changes in precipitation patterns. Coastal erosion, flooding, and droughts are becoming increasingly common, threatening coastal communities and tourism infrastructure. A government official involved in tourism planning noted, "We're developing adaptation strategies but need international support. Climate changes will require a costly reaction, which is not feasible." (Case 3, Environmental Concerns Theme). Document 1, a tourism report, highlighted the risk of climate change to coastal tourism.

- **Unsustainable Tourism Practices:** The rapid growth of tourism, when not managed sustainably, contributes to environmental degradation. Overcrowding at popular sites, the irresponsible disposal of waste, and the depletion of natural resources such as water contribute to long-term environmental damage. According to a local environmental activist, "Waste overwhelms local systems, damaging the perception of the industry."

4. Discussions

This study highlights the complex issues facing Sri Lanka's tourism sector, exposing its susceptibility to a combination of political, economic, and environmental crises. The findings enhance current understanding of tourism crisis management and provide detailed insights into the particular situation of Sri Lanka, a country significantly dependent on tourism revenue. This research highlights the interrelatedness of crises and their cumulative effects on the tourism industry, a perspective generally overlooked in the literature.

The study indicates that political instability, marked by distrust among political groups and societal division, substantially undermines confidence in Sri Lanka as a secure and stable tourist destination. This corroborates the conclusions of Sönmez (1998), which illustrates the clear correlation between political upheaval and diminished tourist arrivals owing to safety apprehensions. The 2019 Easter Sunday attacks highlight this vulnerability, resulting in enduring effects on tourist impressions and travel choices. This study contributes to the existing literature by underscoring the significance of governance and political stability as essential components for a flourishing tourism industry.

The study corroborates the significant effect of economic crises on tourism demand, consistent with Perles-Ribes, Ramón-Rodríguez, Rubia-Serrano, *et al.* (2016), who observed that economic downturns result in less disposable income and modified affordability. Sri Lanka's recent economic crisis, characterised by rampant inflation and currency depreciation, illustrates this phenomenon, leading to a significant decline in tourist numbers. The report highlights the resiliency of the tourist sector through the promotion of domestic tourism, reflecting the measures proposed by Fernando *et al.* (2023). This adaptation technique illustrates the capacity of local initiatives to mitigate the effects of global crises.

Furthermore, the research underscores the growing significance of environmental sustainability in tourism, along with the wider conversation on responsible tourism practices. Environmental degradation, encompassing waste management challenges and ecosystem decline, presents a substantial threat to Sri Lanka's natural assets. The results highlight the necessity for sustainable tourism activities, as noted by Chau *et al.* (2023) and Ritchie (2004) to alleviate negative environmental effects and maintain the destination's attractiveness. This underscores the notion that enduring sustainability necessitates coordinated efforts to harmonise economic development with environmental conservation.

The study recognises the limits inherent in its qualitative methodology, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other contexts. The comprehensive examination of stakeholder viewpoints offers significant understanding of the intricacies of crisis management in the Sri Lankan tourism industry. Future research may examine the enduring impacts of established resilience techniques and analyse the contribution of digital technology to improving crisis preparedness.

This research enhances our comprehension of tourist crisis management by demonstrating the interrelation of political, economic, and environmental issues in a vulnerable, tourism-reliant economy. The results indicate that effective recovery necessitates a comprehensive strategy that tackles these interrelated issues, encourages sustainability, and cultivates collaboration among stakeholders. The research enhances the current scholarly discourse on crisis resilience and offers pragmatic recommendations for policymakers and industry executives aiming to rejuvenate Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

Conclusions and Further Research

The findings of this study highlight the critical challenges faced by Sri Lanka's tourism industry in the wake of political instability, economic downturns, and environmental concerns. Despite its significant potential to drive economic recovery, job creation, and sustainable development, the sector requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to overcome its current difficulties. Through the application of framework analysis, this study has revealed the complex and interconnected nature of these challenges, emphasising the necessity for strategic interventions at both policy and operational levels.

The policy implications of these findings are substantial. Addressing the barriers to sustainable tourism development requires the implementation of targeted policies that support crisis management, infrastructure development, and environmental conservation. Policymakers must prioritise regulatory frameworks that enhance the resilience of the tourism sector while ensuring equitable benefits for local communities. Furthermore, the

integration of sustainable practices and the promotion of Sri Lanka as a safe and attractive destination will be crucial for restoring international confidence in the industry.

Future research should focus on the long-term impacts of these crises on Sri Lanka's tourism industry. Longitudinal studies tracking the recovery of tourism-dependent communities can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of policy measures and resilience-building strategies. Comparative analyses of different crisis management approaches across countries could offer lessons for Sri Lanka's recovery. Additionally, qualitative research exploring tourist experiences and perceptions will be instrumental in shaping marketing and development strategies. Investigating the broader economic implications of tourism disruptions, particularly their effects on ancillary sectors, will further inform sustainable development efforts.

This study thoroughly examined the challenges in Sri Lanka's tourism sector, emphasizing the need for resilience and sustainable development strategies. The results highlight the tourism sector's vulnerabilities to political instability, economic downturns, and environmental issues, offering actionable insights crucial for policymakers and industry stakeholders. This research distinguishes itself through a thorough examination of how political, economic, and environmental crises collectively impact Sri Lanka's tourism industry, backed by detailed case studies and statistical analysis. This research pioneers by filling the gap in comprehensive analysis of interconnected crises in previous studies and suggests tailored strategies to enhance resilience in addressing Sri Lanka's complex challenges. The study's findings are pivotal in shaping evidence-based policies and strategic initiatives to revive the tourism sector, bolster resilience, and propel Sri Lanka's economic recovery and sustainable development endeavours. In conclusion, through proactive strategies, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable measures like infrastructure development and targeted marketing, Sri Lanka can transform its tourism industry into a resilient, inclusive, and prosperous sector. An organised strategy for recovery will not only reinstate the industry's viability but also substantially aid the nation's overall economic resurgence and long-term advancement.

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

W.M. Rohan Laksiri is the sole author of this article and is responsible for all aspects of the research, including conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted technologies

The author declares that he has used generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process before submission, but only to improve the language and readability of their paper and with the appropriate disclosure.

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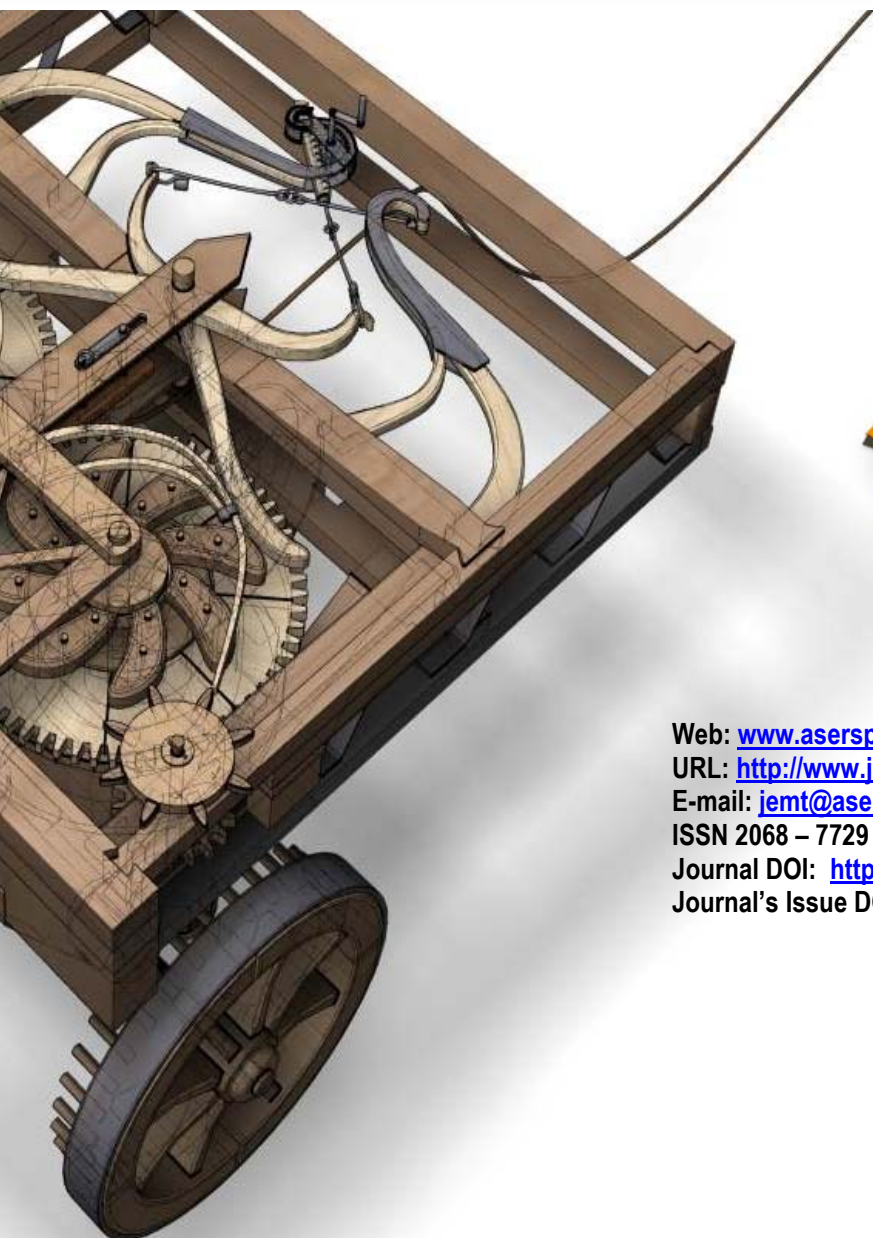
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